

## CHAPTER 4

### QUALIFICATIONS APPRAISAL PANEL INTERVIEW (QAP)

1. INTERVIEW. The applicant will be scheduled for an interview upon successful completion of the Physical Ability Test.

a. Thirty to forty-five minutes should be allowed for the actual interview. Applicants should arrive at the interview site at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled interview time. Note: Applicants must have a valid picture identification to be admitted into the interview.

b. Attire. Applicants should wear clothing appropriate for a business interview. Dress should be conservative and color coordinated. For men, a suit, coat and tie with dress slacks or a Class A military uniform for military personnel would be acceptable. Likewise for women, a business suit, dress, dress skirt/slacks and blouse or Class A military uniform for military personnel is appropriate.

c. Format. The QAP interview determines the applicant's suitability for the position of Cadet, CHP. Questions asked by the panel do not require a law enforcement background. The interview panel has two members: Chairperson - a member trained by the State Personnel Board, and a State Service Representative, usually a CHP Captain, Lieutenant, or Sergeant.

d. Applicants will need to demonstrate the ability to speak clearly and concisely and display confidence. Applicants should be prepared to discuss their personal accomplishments, educational background, work history, and their driving and arrest record. Applicants must be open and absolutely honest with all information. The panel may also ask the applicant to solve hypothetical situations. Applicants should be able to demonstrate knowledge of the duties and functions of a CHP Officer and the California Highway Patrol; explain what they have to offer the CHP; and what they have done to prepare themselves for the position of Cadet, CHP. At the close of the interview, the panel will give the applicant an opportunity to ask questions and make a closing statement. NOTE: Applicants should review the following section entitled "You and Your Interview." (Annex 4-A)

e. Additional Preparations. In order to better prepare, applicants should study the CHP Cadet Bulletin (CHP 179D, blue sheet); review the CHP web site at [www.chp.ca.gov](http://www.chp.ca.gov); talk to a recruiter; research the position; write out answers to obvious questions; participate in practice interview sessions with associates or family members; and/or use a tape recorder or videotape to study the quality of the presentation and consider asking others to view or listen to the tape for constructive criticism.

f. Notification of Results. The applicant will be notified of the results by mail in approximately four to five weeks following the QAP interview. Applicants selected will receive a conditional offer of employment and will continue in the remaining selection phases. Applicants not selected to go forward in the process may re-apply if they still meet the minimum qualifications.

## YOU AND YOUR INTERVIEW

An oral interview can be a stressful situation. By familiarizing yourself with the "mechanics" of an interview and by preparing yourself, you can make your interview a successful experience.

1. PREPARING FOR YOUR ORAL INTERVIEW. The oral interview evaluates intangible qualities of a applicant not easily measured. The oral interview scoring is on a sliding scale ranging from "not passable" to "outstanding." In fact, it is possible to achieve a relatively low score without a single "incorrect" answer, because of evident weaknesses (i.e., poor vocal delivery, lack of eye contact).

a. Before the Interview.

(1) Keep a copy of your application (STD 678) and review it carefully prior to the interview. This is one of the documents the oral panel reviews before your interview and often uses as a starting point of the interview. Know the sequence and dates of the experience and education you listed on the application. The panel may ask you to summarize the highlights of your education and experience. You should prepare, in advance, a brief oral summary of those aspects of your background that you think make you a more competitive applicant.

(2) Study the examination bulletin (CHP 179D). The bulletin explains the needed skills, knowledge, and abilities as well as personal characteristics considered important for the position. The bulletin also offers valuable clues about the oral interview. Never go into an oral interview without any knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of the classification. If possible, talk to CHP Officers about the duties of a CHP Officer, visit the CHP Academy in West Sacramento, or participate in an approved ride-along with a CHP Officer. This demonstrates your interest in becoming a CHP Officer.

(3) Think through each qualification required. Imagine the types of questions you would ask if you were a member of the interview panel. How well can you answer those questions? Try especially to appraise your own knowledge and background in each area. In addition to identifying your strengths, identify areas which may be considered weaknesses. Be prepared to discuss your weaknesses with the interview panel, if they mention them, and what you have or are doing to overcome those weaknesses.

(4) Consider setting up a mock interview using family or friends and having practice interview sessions. This would allow you to receive constructive criticism about your performance. Contact your local CHP Recruiter for information regarding upcoming oral interview seminars or “mock interviews” in your area.

(5) The night before your interview, get a good night's sleep and monitor your general health and mental attitude. You will want a clear head at the interview. Take care of a cold or other minor ailments. Do not take any stimulants or tranquilizers before your interview unless your doctor prescribes them and they will not adversely affect your interview.

b. The Day of the Interview.

(1) Allow plenty of time to get to your destination. Plan to arrive ahead of your scheduled time, particularly if your appointment is early. Should another applicant fail to appear, the oral interview panel may invite you to start your interview early. By late afternoon, the panel may be behind schedule, and you may have to wait. However, do not assume this will be the case. Ensure you arrive on time. Take along the examination announcement and a copy of your application to review. Do try to relax and compose yourself. Even the calmest, most self-assured person is usually somewhat nervous before his or her interview.

(2) Dress appropriately. This is a business interview. Your appearance should indicate that you regard it as such. The oral interview panel is forming impressions about you from your education and experience, your manners, your attitudes, the way you express yourself, and your appearance. Use perfumes/colognes and cosmetics sparingly, and be considerate that others may be allergic.

(3) Know names of panel members. As soon as you arrive at the interview area, ask the receptionist the name of each panel member. Make a note of how to pronounce those names if they seem difficult to pronounce.

c. Beginning the Interview.

(1) The chairperson will introduce you to the other panel member when you enter the interview room. After acknowledging introductions, sit down. The interview will now begin.

(2) Usually, the chairperson will start by briefly reviewing some of your background highlights you listed on your application. Do not interrupt unless there are important misinterpretations. You may be asked a general question to help you get started, such as, "What aspects of your background do you think have best prepared you for this job?" The interview is now under way. The members of the panel will proceed to ask you the kinds of questions they feel will give them an idea of your potential as a CHP Officer.

d. Making Interview Questions Work for You.

(1) Do your best. Remember that the interview panel's job is to help you do your best. At times, you might feel that the panel individually and collectively is trying to seek out only your negative attributes. Actually, this is not true. They are obliged to make a fair and impartial appraisal of your qualifications for the classification of Cadet, CHP. They must consider both your strengths and weaknesses, and want to see you in your best light. Remember, they must interview all applicants, and an uncooperative or complaining applicant may not do well in the interview in spite of their best efforts to bring out the applicant's strongest attributes. Your job is to let the panel see you at your best.

(2) Be natural. Keep your attitude enthusiastic and confident, but not cocky. If you are not confident that you can do the job, do not expect the interview panel to have confidence in you. Do not apologize for your weaknesses; rather try to bring out your strong points. The interview panel is interested in a positive, not a negative presentation. Cockiness and wordiness might make the panel wonder if you are covering up a weakness by a false show of strength. On the other hand, try to use more than a couple of words when you answer each of the panel's questions.

(3) Get comfortable, but do not lounge or sprawl. Sit upright but not stiffly. A careless posture may lead the interview panel to conclude that you are not impressed by the importance of the occasion. This conclusion is natural, even if incorrect. Do not fuss with your clothing or

with a pencil or paper. Your hands may occasionally be useful to emphasize a point, but do not let them become a point of distraction.

(4) Be pleasant, but do not wisecrack or initiate extensive small talk.

This is a business situation, and your attitude should show that you consider it as such. The interview panel's time is limited; the panel does not want to waste it, and neither should you. However, participate appropriately if a panel member chooses to make small talk at the beginning of the interview in order to make you feel more comfortable.

(5) Do not exaggerate your experience or abilities. The interview panel may know more about you than you think. An experienced interview panel is rather adept at spotting such a situation. Do not take this chance.

(6) Knowledge of QAP member. If you know a member of the interview panel, do not make an obvious point of it; but do not hide it. Remain as natural as possible. Go ahead and present your strong points to the panel, rather than waiting for the panel member to do so.

(7) Do not dominate the interview. Let the interview panel direct the interview. The panel will give you the clues. Do not assume that you have to do all the talking. Realize that the panel has a number of questions to ask each applicant. Do not try to take up all the interview time by showing off your extensive knowledge. On the other hand, be sure you have prepared in advance to present the highlights of your strengths to the panel when they ask you for them (or at the end of the interview if they have not been mentioned earlier in the interview).

(8) Be attentive. Usually, your interview lasts approximately 30 to 45 minutes. You should keep your attention at its sharpest throughout the interview. When a panel member is addressing a problem or a question to you, give that person your undivided attention. Address your reply principally to that person but continue eye contact with the other panel member.

(9) Do not interrupt. Panel members may be stating a problem for you to analyze. They will ask you a question when the time comes. Let the problem be stated and wait for the question.

(10) Make sure you understand the question. Do not try to answer a question until you are sure what is being asked. If it is not clear, restate it in your own words or ask the panel member to clarify it for you. Do not argue about minor elements.

(11) Reply promptly but not hastily. Respond as quickly as you can, but do not jump to a hasty, ill-considered answer. It is acceptable to pause before answering. Try not to stare at the window, wall, or ceiling while formulating your answer.

(12) Do not try to create the answer you think the panel member wants. The panel is interested in how you analyze and solve problems. If you give an answer that you really do not think is correct, but believe it is an answer the panel wants, you may have difficulty defending your answer if the panel members ask you to clarify your answer.

(13) Do not switch sides in your reply merely to agree with a panel member. Sometimes a panel member will appear to support the reverse of your answer merely to draw you out and to see if you are willing and able to defend your point of view. Do not start a heated debate; yet, do not surrender a good position. If a position is worth taking, it is worth defending.

(14) Do not be afraid to admit an error in judgment if you are shown to be wrong. The panel knows that you are forced to reply without the opportunity for careful, prolonged consideration of the issue. Your answer may be demonstrably wrong. If so, admit it and get on with the interview.

(15) Do not bring in extraneous comments or tell lengthy anecdotes. Keep your replies to the point. If you feel the need of an illustration from your personal experience, keep it brief and leave out minor details. If you think you might be giving the interview panel too much detail on a specific point, you may want to ask them whether they would like you to elaborate further.

(16) Do not use slang terms or use words improperly. Many good replies have been weakened by the use of slang terms or other language faults. Frequently, the panel will note any errors in grammar or diction or other evidence of carelessness in your speech habits (i.e., use of phrases such as “yeah,” “uh-huh,” or “you know” and mumbling).

(17) Present your strengths in terms of how you could benefit the Department if hired. Be ready to tell the panel how your education, prior work experience, military experience, volunteer work, hobbies/clubs/achievements, physical fitness, or other activities have helped prepare you for the position.

e. Closing The Interview.

(1) The chairperson usually concludes the interview by asking if you have anything to add. You should take advantage of this opportunity to make a closing statement. The closing statement should include your overall qualifications, personal achievements, methods of preparation, items that were not covered in the interview, and reasons why you should be given favorable consideration. The tone of your closing statement should be positive, upbeat, and brief (approximately 30 seconds).

(2) If it seems appropriate to shake hands with the interview panel members, it is fine to do so. If it would be awkward or uncomfortable for you, then you probably are better off not shaking their hands, however, should the panel members extend their hands first, you are recommended to shake hands. A smile and a statement from you such as, "Thanks again for your time," should end the interview on a positive note.